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Government Speaks to Yukon-Wide Radon Pilot Project

WHITEHORSE – Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is wrapping up a Yukon-wide radon pilot project.

The project, partly funded by Health Canada, involved testing a sample of 166 Yukon workplaces to obtain preliminary results on radon concentrations.

"The data we collected has provided us with an overview of radon concentrations in Yukon workplaces," Rob McClure, Safety Officer with Yukon Workers' Compensation, Health and Safety Board, said. "The data is preliminary, but we will combine it with data from Yukon Housing Corporation on private dwellings to develop a map of Yukon that may show us if there are areas that tend to have elevated radon levels."

Radon levels were tested over the winter of 2007/08; preliminary results were recently sent to building managers and private business owners whose buildings were tested as part of the project.

"Preliminary readings show that all sites met Health Canada's previous radon concentration guidelines, and more than 80% of Yukon sites tested meet Health Canada's new, more stringent guideline," McClure said. "Those that did not meet the new guidelines will need to be more

thoroughly tested and possibly remediated."

Remediation can include sealing cracks and other non-sealed openings in foundations or basements, and improving ventilation. All building managers and owners whose buildings showed higher than acceptable levels were provided with remediation recommendations to help mitigate the radon.

"Radon does not pose an immediate danger to health and is only a concern if there is prolonged exposure to high concentrations over many years," Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's Medical Health Officer, said. "The only known health effect of radon is that it increases the risk of lung cancer but this also depends on the concentration of radon in the air and the number of years of exposure."

While the majority of Yukon workplaces meet Health Canada's guidelines, Yukoners are being encouraged to have their homes tested to ensure they meet the new guidelines.

"Most people spend more time at home than at work, so it is important to test living spaces in addition to workplaces," Juergen Korn, Research & Development Project Manager with Yukon Housing Corporation, said.

Yukon Housing Corporation provides home radon test units to Yukon residents at no cost. For more information call 667-5759, or toll-free in Yukon at 1-800-661-0408 extension 5759.

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